

EVENTS AS STRATEGIC MARKETING TOOLS IN SHOPPING CENTERS

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This article aims to investigate how UK shopping centers can strategically use event spaces as marketing tools, through identifying the needs of their key stakeholders. The study uses a large shopping center outside of London as its case study as it reputedly has the largest dedicated events space of its kind in the UK. Both primary and secondary research was conducted. Secondary research was undertaken in order to establish how and why marketing is used in shopping centers through the types of entertainment used, and how these are accessed by different typologies of shoppers. Stakeholder theory was also explored in relation to tensions that may exist within the different stakeholders involved. Primary research was then conducted in order to establish if such tensions exist, within the strategic use of the event space. This was in the form of semistructured interviews, with eight store managers and three of the leadership team from the shopping center. This is therefore a property-led approach as opposed to a customer led focus. The conclusions drawn showed the necessity for regular stakeholder analyses, as situations change and new events are introduced. This research is only based on one shopping center based in UK so may not be representative of all UK shopping centers. However, implications can impact any form of shopping center or mall. No direct contribution in this study is to customers/shopping center visitors although the management team has undertaken customer surveys to support the framework. The framework of strategic shopping center/mall event management was formulated to support retailtainment objectives. This was deemed crucial in the growing market for entertainment through events in shopping centers and malls.

Key words: Shopping centers; Retail event space; Stakeholder tensions; Marketing strategies

Introduction

Shopping centers (known internationally as shopping malls) are some of the busiest locations in the world (Howard, 1997). According to Swinyard (1998), “except for home and work, we spend more time in shopping malls than anywhere else” (p. 167).

Guy (1994), Hahn (2000), and Sit, Johnson Morgan, and Woodside (2008) have proposed several definitions of types of shopping centers ranging from Super Regional Shopping Centers covering up to 1.5 million square feet of shopping space to Convenience Centers of less than 30,000 square feet. There was a growth seen in shopping center developments

according to Berman and Evans (2004), with new malls and shopping centers continuously being developed, including new retail space being added to existing malls. Yet subsequent to their research, Segal (2009) stated that in the US, 1,500 malls had closed or turned into other uses, such as office buildings, because of economic factors including the global recession. Lotz, Eastlick, Mishra, and Shim (2010), in their research into understanding patrons' participation in activities at malls, argue that future usage and attendance at malls could be highly influenced by participation in activities such as events. Although this research was US based, it has important ramifications for UK shopping centers too.

They further suggested that malls need to reinvent themselves to survive and one such mechanism could be the use of more entertainment as an integral part of the shopping experience. These forms of entertainment include restaurants, theaters, museums, and use of dedicated event space—known in the US as retailtainment (Segal, 2009). Kent (2007) writes about the linkages between creativity and retailing and how the linkage has not been a strong one until recently because the creativity tended to reside in the products rather than the retailers. However, developing a core competence through more individualized creative experiences is one that retailers can exploit. Spaces are needed for interactivity and socialization and these can be gained through the proactive usage of event spaces.

It is essential for shopping center managers to know how attractive their malls are to their customers and what particular attributes are attractive to some and perhaps not to others (Wong, Yu, & Yuan, 2001). However, there are also tensions within the use of these dedicated event spaces from within the various stakeholders. This article seeks to explore how to identify the stakeholder needs within the shopping centers and in particular stakeholder conflicts over the use of these event spaces as marketing tools. This research aims to investigate how to strategically use this space within marketing campaigns while satisfying the various stakeholders' needs.

Shopping Center/Mall Marketing

It has been suggested by various researchers that there is a growing need for shopping centers to compete and market themselves effectively,

because of the increasingly competitive industry they find themselves in (Howard, 1997; Kim, Christiansen, Feinberg, & Choi, 2005; Kirkup & Rafiq, 1999; LeHew & Fairhurst, 2000; Sit et al., 2008). Warnaby, Bennison, and Davies (2005) suggest that in order to thrive in intensely competitive environments shopping centers/malls need effective marketing and promotion. They refer to these centers as "planned" shopping centers as opposed to retail centers that have developed piecemeal. The planned shopping centers are under one ownership and intentional in their design and layout.

Shopping centers/malls have an element of "sameness" about them despite the many diverse market segments who visit malls/shopping centers (Parsons & Ballantine, 2004). This diverse customer base is therefore making mass market promotions difficult and the management of the malls/shopping centers are looking at ways of differentiating the offers to meet the market demands. Many promotional campaigns and the associated branding materials are still expressly aimed to engender familiarity for the consumer so that they feel at home searching for their favorite brands. Burns and Warren (1995) argue that the offerings of many malls are so similar that the only choice is often location, yet the desire for uniqueness should also be considered. Management of these malls/centers should look for ways to develop an inimitability that will bring the shoppers to their location despite the distances traveled, known as "out shopping." This, however, has to be based on recognizing the needs of all the disparate stakeholders within the center itself. The marketing of shopping centers falls slightly outside both the traditional marketing mix and the enhanced services marketing mix, largely because of their range of customers—not only do shopping centers cater to shoppers, they must also take into account tenants, owners, and trade.

Several researchers have created frameworks particularly for shopping center marketing. Kirkup and Rafiq (1999) suggested that the shopping center marketing mix should consist of preopening marketing and postopening (active) marketing. Warnaby and Yip (2005) suggested that shopping centers can be classified as a service using Booms and Bitner's (1981, cited in Brassington & Pettitt, 2006) services marketing mix conceptualization. However, this framework has been criticized because

of the large amount of focus on the marketing of the shopping center before it opens.

Shopping Center Entertainment Marketing Mix

With so many changes and additions to how shopping centers are run, more recently Sit et al. (2008) suggested an addition to the shopping center marketing mix, in that it should include shopping center entertainment, which is broken down into three categories: food entertainment, specialty entertainment, and special event entertainment (SEE).

Although food entertainment and specialty entertainment are seen as being permanent to the retailer mix of a shopping center, including food courts and restaurants, cinemas, and arcades, SEE is described as "an event oriented stimulus which is highly intangible and variable in nature" (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1999, cited in Sit & Johnson Morgan, 2009, p. 4). This is a type of entertainment that is offered on a short-term, ad hoc basis and includes events such as fashion shows and celebrity personal appearances (Sit & Merrilees, 2005).

Using these types of events gives shoppers "another reason to visit, visit more often, stay longer and thus spend more at their shopping precincts" (Sit & Johnson Morgan, 2009, p. 2), thereby aiding in fulfilling the main objectives of most shopping centers. These events should also "create a degree of excitement above the usual quality of the shopping experience" (Wakefield & Baker, 1998, cited in Parsons, 2003, p. 75).

Stakeholder Theory

Freeman (1984) first defined stakeholders as "any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (p. 46). This definition has attracted much criticism because of its assumption that anyone can be a stakeholder, leaving an organization responsible to many others, possibly unnecessarily. With this in mind, Thompson, Wartick, and Smith (1991) declared stakeholders to be "in a relationship with the organisation" (p. 209). This definition is more transactional, therefore reducing the number of stakeholders somewhat. However, it still neglects to give an order of importance in stakeholder management, which in the context of shopping mall

stakeholders can lead to conflicts as to the different priorities and needs each group has especially in relation to their marketing needs within the overall programs within the center. Additionally, this theory in particular is especially relevant in the evolving retail industry, as it allows for stakeholders to rise or fall in stature depending on the situation they are in at any given moment.

Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) stressed that it is important to know which stakeholders are relevant to an organization in order to know which ones should be attended to. It was especially important that these stakeholders were identified in terms of their salience, particularly with regard to the marketing strategy, and how the events space is facilitated. Identifying the most salient stakeholders, and working with their needs, should lead to a more proactive marketing strategy within the shopping center for the use of the dedicated event space.

Methodology

In this study, the interpretivist paradigm was pursued with an inductive approach, in order to look at the topic in close detail, before drawing a more considered conclusion. The primary research was made up of a series of semistructured interviews with a view to investigating opinions of the existing events strategies. Foddy (1993) suggests that open questions are very effective as they allow interview participants to "say what is really on their minds without being influenced by suggestions" (p. 127).

This study used homogenous sampling in order to define the sample of participants. This sampling technique is considered especially useful in studies that focus on just one particular group in depth. During the study, eight store managers were interviewed. A sample of this size allowed for high-quality interviews throughout the primary research, yet also allowed for a wider variety of themes and opinions to come through. This in turn led to a more comprehensive framework. Additionally, three managers from the Management Offices were also interviewed in order to establish their own opinions on how the events space should be run, as well as to determine where the stakeholder tensions were strongest and for what reason.

Once the interviews had taken place, they were transcribed and key themes identified to form a

framework for future strategic retail marketing planning. Thematic analysis was used in order to establish the main themes throughout the interviews. This was useful as it allows for comparisons to be made regarding specific issues (Flick, 2009). According to Aronson (1994), thematic analysis is a multistage model with relevant patterns combining to create subthemes. The analysis worked towards putting together a framework of events as marketing tools in shopping center strategic planning.

In addition, a stakeholder analysis was also carried out in this study, in order to determine whose needs and opinions were the most salient in determining the future activities of the event space under review. This used Mitchell et al.'s (1997) theory of stakeholder salience, using power, urgency, and legitimacy as the variables to determine whose voices are the most important.

Findings and Discussion

Stakeholder Tensions

The analysis shows the most salient stakeholders at this point in time are the retailers and the operations department, and dependent on the situation, Environmental Health, because of their obligation to public well-being. The analysis of the stakeholders can be seen in Table 1.

The analysis also picked up several stakeholders who are considered dominant, with moderate salience: shoppers, the marketing team, and the commercialization team. Each of the stakeholders has different claims on the event space, how it is run, and which events are held there. It is imperative these are monitored as situations change and new events are introduced to determine their standing, and whose needs are most important at any one time.

Lack of Clear Strategy

Given the large amount of stakeholders attached, it can be difficult to define which groups should be given the highest priority in event decision making, a notion supported by Mitchell et al.'s (1997) theory of stakeholder salience. A huge priority seen in this research is the attractiveness of these events, and how they fit in with the overall retail marketing strategy. However, the existing Commercialization Manager feels that

We believe there is a direct correlation between the event and what it will achieve for us tactically, uh, in terms of the business or the marketing strategy.

It is clear this is not a view that is shared by management and retailers throughout the rest of the center. The Center Director sums this up with the comment that

The issue with the events strategy is it is very targeted towards income. So it has a requirement to meet certain financial targets which are not currently aligned to the marketing strategy.

Store Manager B felt more effort should be made in deciding which events are held, stating that:

I always feel like there was very little effort put into what is decided to go there, whereas obviously they are sold and the purpose of them being there is to make money, but I don't think they are very exciting and they don't bring people into the shopping center.

The main message from the retailers interviewed was the belief that there seem to be two very separate visions for the event space: one of hitting targets (including footfall), and another of maximizing use of the event space to utilize it as a unique selling point.

The event space clearly needs a more clearly defined events strategy, in what it needs to achieve going forward, and at what times of the year. This is especially the case given that, other than seasonal events, the general consensus demonstrates that the marketing strategy and events strategy currently do not interlink in any way. The Head of Marketing made this clear when asked how she felt the two were aligned.

Not at all. At this point in time the marketing strategy is not aligned at all with the commercialization [strategy], therefore events program. The events program is purely in place to derive an income for the joint owners of the property, and not as a marketing tool.

The second point of this quote picks up on the way the shopping center is managed. Although several authors suggest the consumer-led approach is more effective in shopping center management and marketing (Howard, 1997), in this case the property-led approach is the more beneficial one. This approach,

Table 1
Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder	Power?	Urgency?	Legitimacy?	Stakeholder Type
Retailers	Retailers rely on events that attract new shoppers, in order to meet their targets. They are also in the overwhelming majority, with 180 retailers in the center. They are also where the large majority of income to the center comes from.	If the events are not strong enough, there is a possibility that the low attendees will translate into lower foot-fall. This has the possibility of leading to lower incomes.	Retailers not only pay rent to the shopping center, they also pay towards the service charge, which part funds some of the events.	Definitive
Shoppers	If the shoppers do not enjoy the events that are held, they will not be likely to attend again. This drives shoppers away and potentially to competitors instead.	Shoppers are primarily in the center to shop, so it is unlikely that any of their demands are particularly urgent.	The shoppers are the people who spend money in the retailers in the center, and so cannot be ignored in this respect.	Dominant
Marketing team	The marketing team needs the events strategy to fit in with the marketing strategy, in order to enhance the brand and meet the business objectives.	The longer term of this strategy means that while this is important, it can give way to more important objectives from other areas.	Enhancing the brand and meeting the objectives makes the shopping center more attractive to potential retailers and investors, and also increases the value of the offer.	Dominant
Operations team	The operations team can order the cancellation of an event if it does not meet the health and safety requirements, for the safety of the public.	If the safety of the public is in danger because of an event, it is imperative that operational instructions are followed.	In case of danger to the public through an unsafe event, the reputation of the shopping center would diminish.	Definitive
Commercialization team	Commercialization have a large income target to make each year, with a fairly high proportion of this coming from the event space. This means they are often likely to accept exhibitions from organizations that do not fit with the brand values in order to hit targets.	If the income target is not reached, their performance would be called into question by the higher management. So, it is important that some of their requirements are taken into consideration, or reduced.	While income is important, there are other needs to be considered by other stakeholders both internal to Center Management and outside.	Dominant
Joint owners	The joint owners need the event space to break even each year, so this needs to be taken into consideration in the schedule of events.	Primary objective of the business is to make money for the owners; although if the event space didn't break even it wouldn't cause losses across the board, it would ultimately show that it was underperforming.	While their claim is not necessarily important, they do own the building and this should be taken into account.	Dormant
Pressure groups	Through money and media attention, it is possible that at times pressure groups could be considered powerful; however, this is probably not the case with events as much as strategic implications such as the listing of the building.	Pressure groups are more concerned with the structure of the building and protecting it from major changes, so are not likely to make a claim on the events space.	Other than having an emotional connection to the shopping center, it is not necessary for them to be involved in anything to do with the events held.	Dormant
Environmental health	Environmental health are concerned with the safety of the general public, and have the power to shut down any event that they feel does not meet health and safety requirements.	The main priority for environmental health is the safety of the general public, and if their needs are not met, any decisions by the management team can be overridden by them.	Environmental health have a very legitimate claim on the events held, as they have the ability to prosecute managers should the public safety be compromised.	Definitive

as backed up by the Head of Marketing, puts forward that the management and marketing of shopping centers should be geared towards increasing the value of the shopping center as a whole, and the strengths of lettings and site demands, as opposed to the contrasting consumer-led approach (Howard, 1997).

There is a definite need to reach customers by way of an integrated program of marketing in the shopping center, such as Kirkup and Rafiq's (1999) proposed shopping center marketing mix. This approach consisted of both pre- and postopening marketing, both giving a large focus to shopping center communications and appearance. Store Manager G felt this was especially the case in consideration of the increasingly competitive environment shopping centers are finding themselves in, where even the smaller centers are beginning to position themselves through advertising. This entirely backs up the competitive industry referred to in the literature review by several authors (Howard, 1997; Kirkup & Rafiq, 1999; Kim et al., 2005; LeHew & Fairhurst, 2000; Sit et al., 2008).

Store Manager G suggested that a full program of marketing was needed, afterwards adding

If you look at, small shopping centers, like Peterborough now, they're branching out to other counties . . . you know . . . Spalding, the outlet village, they're branching out as well by advertising.

In consideration of this environment, it is vital to ensure the standard of events and other customer facing services is kept at a high.

Lack of Retailer Involvement and Relevance

At present, although there is a program for retailers to use mall sites free of charge for a couple of days each year, this is not the case for space in the events area. This is useful for them, especially given the lack of budget for this from their own head offices, as mentioned earlier by LeHew and Fairhurst (2000). However, many retailers have also mentioned that they would love to be involved in events, particularly exhibitions. Store Manager H believes that all good events should involve retailers. He stated

For a center like this, for me what constitutes a good event is something that incorporates elements of the centre, incorporates retailers.

However the exhibitions are not directly organized by the management team but by external organizers who have their own income targets. Store Manager C, marketing manager of a large department store, is not happy with this, especially given the considerable pull their presence would add, commenting:

At the moment, there is absolutely no incentive for retailers to get involved . . . and I've already dealt with one event organizer who will not budge on price at all, even though I wanted [to pay for stands at] all three events at the same time.

The Head of Marketing believes that as, primarily, a retail establishment, retailers must be at the absolute core of marketing and commercialization activities.

I think it is absolutely mandatory to better understand the requirements of our retailers in the production and implementation of any events program that is going to sit on their doorstep to ensure that its brand presentation adds to their own retail format, [and] does not conflict with their retail format.

This point demonstrates not only the importance of events directly involving retailers, but also that the content of the events do not clash with existing retailers. For example, an exhibition featuring several stalls selling makeup should not be held to the detriment of other retailers selling similar items in the center. This again highlights the importance of the property-led approach to shopping center marketing, in that it is imperative to improve the shopping center's standing for its retailers primarily, rather than just the shoppers (Howard, 1997).

Characteristics That Make a Good Event

Many suggestions were put forward as to what makes a good event, most of which were aligned with Sit et al.'s (2008) special event entertainment framework, which was described in the earlier literature as "an event oriented stimulus which is highly intangible and variable in nature" (Wakefield & Blodgett, 1999, cited in Sit et al., 2008, p. 4).

It seemed to be important to retailers that the variety of events held some exclusivity, not only in something that had never been seen before, but also something better than events appearing in other shopping centers across the country. Retailers

suggested the events must contain some of what was described as the "wow factor." It was deemed important that shoppers should walk away feeling a sense of amazement, through high quality entertainment to draw them back in the future for the entertainment as much as the retail offering.

Additionally, retailers voiced that events should stick to their theme properly—whether a food market, a garden show, or a seasonal event. It seemed imperative from the retailers' perspective that events should not divert from their supposed theme, particularly when they have been advertised in a particular way.

Table 2 shows details of emergent themes throughout the interviews, in terms of what would make a good event, with some of the keywords mentioned by the interviewees.

In terms of what made an event successful, store managers also reported three desired outcomes: increases in footfall, dwell time, and sales, entirely concurrent with the recorded literature and industry assumptions in the earlier literature (Cowper, 1993; Sillitoe & Creaser, 2010; Stubbs, Warnaby, & Medway, 2002). Store Manager D is the owner of a bespoke jewelry store looking particularly for sales, and new leads, whereas Store Manager E, manager

of a nationwide department store, felt footfall was just as important. They comment, respectively:

Money in the till . . . and new orders. If there have been a lot of inquiries . . . and we're busy, and lots of people are asking about different wedding rings, how much they are, things like that . . . we do see a big difference in how the shop is.

I can appreciate not everything can put money in the till, but if it gets me revenue 2 or 3 months down the line that to me is a positive event. Obviously increasing foot flow.

Perhaps the most favored outcome of a successful event was its effect on dwell time. This theme ran through all of the interviews, both retailers and managers, and focused on the use of the dedicated event spaces a driver for increasing the amount of time spent in the center. The Center Director set this out clearly with a large focus on the need to keep shoppers in the center for as long as possible:

It's about encouraging them to continue to use this as your social environment, as your social interaction space, because dwell time, we now understand, will now lead to increased sales and expenditure.

Table 2
Emerging Characteristics in What Makes a "Good" Event

Emerging Themes	Keywords Mentioned
Exclusivity	"Retail theater" "a UK first" "they come to a shopping centre to go shopping and they are surprised and, we hope, delighted" "something quite exclusive . . . it's just going to be for the shopping center"
Stirring emotions	"if you can . . . erupt an emotion from somebody, like the beach for example, for me personally it was like, 'oh, I want to go to the beach!,' and it reminded me of home"
Visual attractiveness	"I want to walk away and think, wasn't that amazing?" "striking . . . when you're there and there's music playing and there's lights . . . that creates an interest" "needs to be . . . eye catching"
Targeting broad market	"it needs to be a broader market, it can't just be specific" "things like Christmas and beach, they're also there for the centre, but they're a draw for us, the reason why people would come to us instead of going to another centre"
Build up	"people know it's coming, and they get really excited about it" "effort and time that's been put into promoting that, so either in the local newspaper, or . . . on the TV"
Theming	"themed . . . that have a definite title to them, and everything follows" "if you start talking about a French market, or a German market, or a food market . . . people have a lot more impression now about what is that, is it exclusively selling French foods, or is it one chap selling Brie, and a whole load of other things counter aligned to it that has nothing to do with French foods."

The Head of Marketing also believes that the event space is transforming, and that its main use aside from gaining income for the landlords is to increase dwell time for the shopping center.

Its function is also to help to increase dwell time and to enliven the mall space.

With this in mind, it is imperative that the use of the event space, as well as the specialty and food entertainment opportunities, is optimized.

Retailers Desire for Return of Fashion Show

When retailers were asked which events they would like to see in the future, an overwhelming response came in the form of a fashion show. Each year until 2009, there was a fashion show with a celebrity compere. However, because of a lack of financial support by retailers, the decision was taken to cancel this event. Store Manager C commented on the effect the Fashion Show had on retailers:

One thing . . . is the fashion shows. . . . I think all the fashion retailers are keen to get involved with something like that. . . . It just has far more impact than any small events that we've put on in store, and I think that's really important.

Fashion shows are widely reported to help retailers (LeHew & Fairhurst, 2000), and Sit and Johnson Morgan (2009) back this up, stating that they give shoppers "another reason to visit, visit more often, stay longer and thus spend more at their shopping precincts" (p. 2).

Events Drawing Out Through the Entire Center

Although the majority of retailers are happy with the center's seasonal events, a few felt that because of the size and shape of the shopping center, it was easy for some to feel left out. Store Manager E, who is located at the opposite end of the shopping center, summed this up, stating that:

I thought it [Christmas] was very appealing to people who shop that end, but I didn't feel that the whole theme followed through the centre. So I felt like once you'd moved out of the square, there was token lights across the center but it almost got that . . . the further you are down the center, the more you become like a poor relation.

Issues such as the layout of the shopping center are near impossible to solve, not only because the building is already standing but because of rigorous planning processes. However, it is possible that events could be extended further through the malls in order to ensure the retailers felt more integrated. Store Manager E suggests:

I've come from a business that was very visual, and I think there's got to be something that I remember in terms of, oh, that beautiful display which I now see across the center that's triggered on . . . it's that same dress I keep seeing right the way across the center.

This quote echoes the thoughts of others, and shows how open the retailers are to the events that take place in the dedicated event space. This is not only something that would work with seasonal events but also with exhibitions and other events too.

Conclusions

The stakeholder analysis shows that at present there are three definitive stakeholders: the retailers, the operations team, and environmental health. However, there are also several other stakeholders who are considered to be moderately salient, who could become definitive depending on each situation. It is absolutely crucial that stakeholder analyses are conducted regularly, in order to ensure that the needs of the correct stakeholders are taken into account. It is therefore acknowledged that this is a property-led rather than customer-led approach. Although the center in question has undertaken research in the form of surveys, to gain insight into the views of the consumers in forming the strategy, they have not been expressly included in this research. Including the customers could allow for three further considerations: a) the type of events that would bring them in, b) whether events encourage them to visit the stores, and c) when they attend, do they make purchases?

From the results it is clear that events need to fulfill certain criteria if a high quality is to be maintained and they are to support the overall marketing strategy. In addition to the need for retailer involvement in events, there is also a need for some sort of framework to define what a shopping center event should involve in order for it to be successful, to

make sure the event space is being used to fulfill the marketing needs. The research highlighted four main factors to facilitate this: 1) allowance for retailer participation, both directly and indirectly, 2) exclusivity, 3) clarity of theme, and 4) visual attractiveness.

There is a high level of interest from retailers to participate in events; however, for the majority of these events the financial implication means this is something that is not feasible. For this reason it is imperative that retailers are given some form of

incentive to be involved, be it financial or otherwise. This could be done via a program that is obligatory for exhibition organizers to adhere to, or perhaps by offering a discount on the rate card given to other traders. By doing this, not only would tensions affecting retailers be eased, but in addition, weight would be added to the events themselves with the attraction of national retailers taking part, which, it is expected, would allow for the event space to remain as a prominent events space in the nationwide shopping center industry.

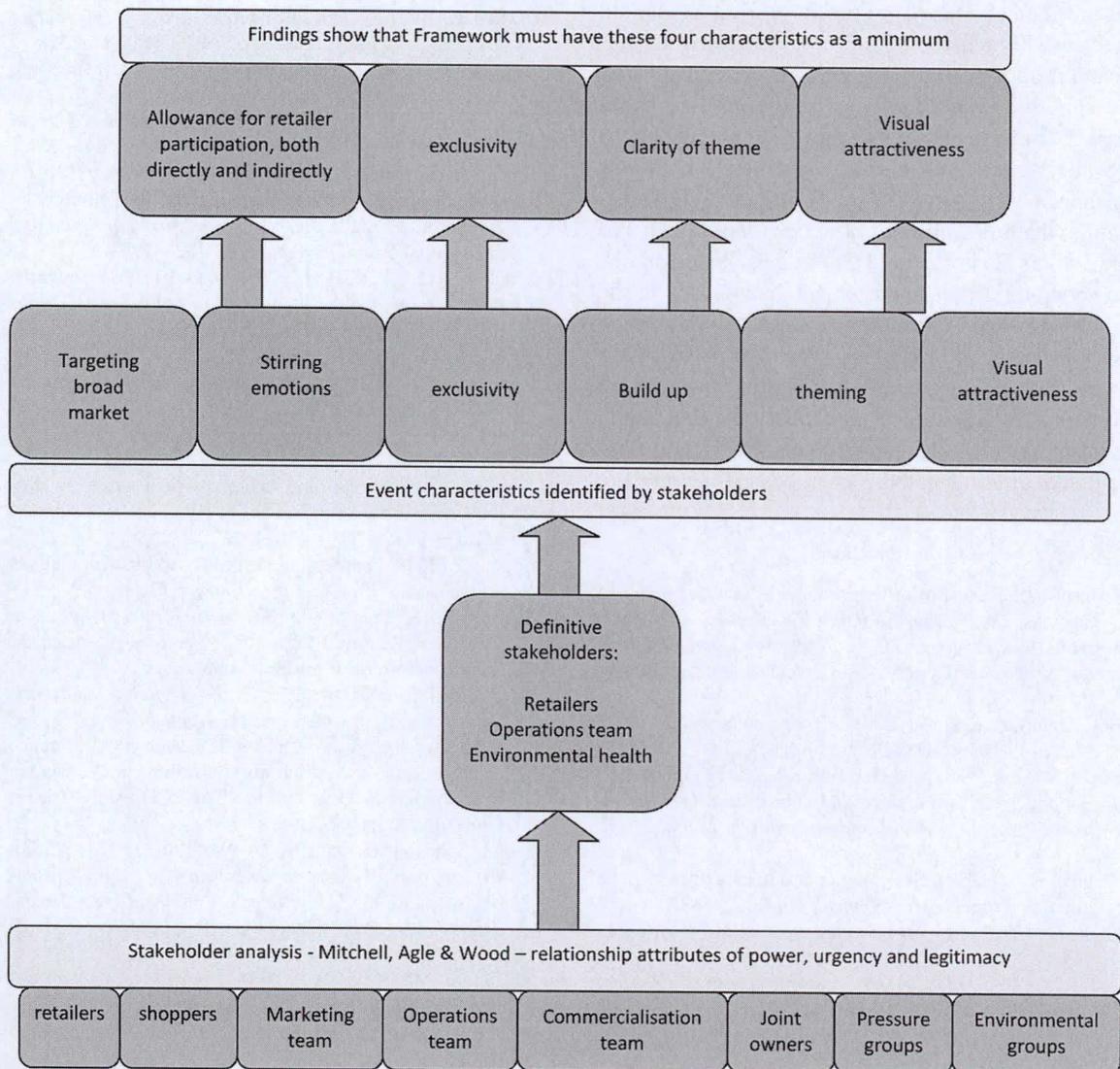


Figure 1. Framework for events as strategic marketing tools.

Picking up on the theme of exclusivity in what retailers would like to see, another line of events to introduce could include product launches, and experiential promotions that have not been seen before anywhere else in the UK. As well as exciting shoppers and retailers, this will also generate press locally and regionally, as well as in the relevant trade press, and will therefore continue to raise the value of the property as an asset. Given the need for theming that has been picked up on by retailers in the primary research, another imperative is that all exhibitions planned by outside organizers demonstrate exactly what they are titled. For example, as one manager noted, a French food market should sell just French foods, and not house other irrelevant products.

This study has contributed to the existing literature a firm viewpoint of what is important to the retailers themselves in shopping center event space management as part of the marketing strategy, something which has up until now been largely ignored by authors. This supports the property-led approach to shopping center management, as opposed to the widely accepted consumer-led approach. However, even in keeping the retailers as the main stakeholders in decision making, developing a framework relevant to themes will ensure that shoppers are also happy with the results and improvements with the retail-entertainment offering, and this is proposed in Figure 1.

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